

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 FEA-01 /078 W

-----250142Z 023003 /63

P R 241332Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9930

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: NEGOTIATORS REACH ACCORD ON PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT

REF: BRUSSELS 4948

SUMMARY: FIFTEEN DAYS OF INTER-PARTY NEGOTIATIONS, AND A
BREAKTHROUGH EARLIER TODAY (MAY 24) ON THE CRUCIAL QUESTION
OF THE LIMITS OF BRUSSELS, COULD GIVE BELGIUM A NEW, FOUR-
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PARTY COALITION GOVERNMENT BY EARLY JUNE. THIS IS CONTINGENT,
HOWEVER, ON PARTY APPROVAL WHICH - DESPITE SOME FLEMISH
RESERVATIONS - COULD COME LATER DAY. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER FIFTEEN DAYS OF INTENSIVE BARGAINING,
NEGOTIATORS OF THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN, SOCIALIST, VOLK-
SUNIE (FLEMISH REGIONALIST) AND FDF (BRUSSELS FRANCOPHONE)

PARTIES THIS MORNING (MAY 24) REACHED ACCORD ON A PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH - IF APPROVED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES LATER TODAY - WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR A NEW QUADRIPARTITE COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH COULD BE IN PLACE BY JUNE 1. LITTLE SUBSTANCE HAS BEEN REVEALED IN THE FEW OFFICIAL STATEMENTS (REFTEL) REGARDING THE TERMS OF THE ACCORD. HOWEVER, BROAD OUTLINES OF THE AGREED PSOTIONS ON KEY ISSUES HAVE BECOME AVAILABLE.

2. BRUSSELS LIMITS. ON THE THORNIEST PROBLEM OF THE LIMITS OF BRUSSELS, IT WAS AGREED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO TERRITORIAL ENLARGEMENT OF THE CAPITAL. BUT FRANCO- PHONES LIVING IN FLEMISH COMMUNES ON THE PERIPHERY OF BRUSSELS WILL RECEIVE CERTAIN GUARANTEES REGARDING EDUCATION, CULTURAL FACILITIES AND LANGUAGE- RELATED SERVICES.

3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM AGREED UPON FOLLOWS BROADLY PROPOSALS PREVIOUSLY OUTLINED BY TINDEMANS - BUT WITH A FEW CONCESSIONS TO THE SOCIALISTS. AMONG THESE WERE A GREATER MEASURE OF FREEDOM FOR PUBLIC INDUSTRIAL INITIATIVES, AND MINOR REFORMS IN THE BANKING SECTOR. A COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY POLICY IS TO BE DEVELOPED AND PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BEFORE THE END OF 1977. WITH REGARD TO LIBERALIZATION OF THE LAW ON ABORTION, THE INITATIVE IS TO BE LEFT TO PARLIAMENT, WITH DEPUTIES BEING ALLOWED TO VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCES ON THIS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE. ON THE OTHER CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE WHICH FIGURED IN THE RECENT CAMPAIGN - THE EXISTING UNCLASSIFIED

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PARALLEL SECULAR AND CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM - THERE APPEARS TO BE A DELIBERATE DECISION TO MAKE NO MENTION OF IT IN THE PROGRAM.

4. STRUCTURAL REFORM. BELGIUM IS TO HAVE A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, THREE REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS (FLANDERS, BRUSSELS AND WALLONIA), AND TWO COMMUNITY ADMINISTRATIONS (FLEMISH AND FRANCOPHONE). EACH ECHELON WILL HAVE ITS ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE. EACH WILL BE EMPOWERED TO LEGISLATE WITHIN ITS PARTICULAR AREA OF COMPETENCE. AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL THE JURISDICTION WILL EXTEND MAINLY TO QUESTIONS OF EDUCATION, CULTURAL AFFAIRS, YOUTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES. THE AUTHORITY OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS, NOT YET SPELLEDOUT IN DETAIL, WILL ENCOMPASS ALL AREAS NOT SPECIFICALLY RESERVED TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE REGIONS WILL ENJOY A SUBSTNATIAL MEASURE OF INDEPENDENCEON ECONOMIC MATTERS. THE THREE REGIONAL SSEMBPLIES WILL BE LECTED BY DIRECT, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. THERE WILL BE SOME OVERLAP IN THE ASSEMBLIES. REGIONAL

REPRESENTATIVES WILL BECOME MEMBER OF THE NATION'S
UPPER HOUSE (SENATE) AS WELL AS SIT IN THEIR APPROPRIATE
COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES. THE PROVINCES WILL DISAPPEAR AS
POLITICAL UNITS, REPLACE BY SUB-REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE
BODIES. THESE COMPLEX AND FAR-REACHING CHANGES WILL BE
EFFECTED IN TWO STAGES: TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, DEFINI-
TIVE REGIONALIZATION WILL BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE
AUTHORITY OF ARTICLE 107(D) OF THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION.
THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM WILL COME INTO EFFECT FOLLOWING
REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION BY THE FOLLOWING PARLIAMENT.
TO SEE THIS PROCESS THROUGH, THE PARTIES REPORTEDLY HAVE
AGREED TO REMAIN IN COALITION OVER WHAT COULD BE BE THE NEXT
EIGHT YEARS.

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5. TINDEMANS TOLD REPORTERS EARLY TODAY THAT, ASSUMING

THE FOUR PARTY EXECUTIVES APPROVE THE ACCORD LATER TODAY,
A NEW GOVERNMENT COULD BE FORMED OVER THE WEEKEND. THE
PRIME MINISTER BROUGHT ABOUT A BREAKTHROUGH ON THE HIGHLY
CONTENTIOUS ISSUE OF BRUSSELS LIMITS BY GIVING PARTY
NEGOTIATORS A TWO-HOUR DEADLINE TO REACH AGREEMENT. IN
FACT IT TOOK SIX HOURS - UNTIL 4:00 A.M. TODAY - TO AGREE
ON A FOR ULA FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE OF BELGIUM'S DUTCH
AND FRENCH-SPEAKING CITIZENS LIVING IN AND AROUND THE
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